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## The Sauna on the Roof

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# The Sauna on the Roof

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## Javier Rojas

I remember the summer my dad and I worked on our roof that had collapsed in our backyard. At the time the thought of spending my days fixing a roof was the last thing I wanted to do that summer. But when he added the incentive that he would buy me a new baseball glove, I just had to. Summer time as a kid reminded me of playing baseball and my dad promised for months about finally buying me a glove, so this was an opportunity that I couldn't miss out on.

I remember those hot, sweaty afternoons that felt like I was in a sauna and the harsh smell of black, melting tar and the sweat that stuck my shirt to my back. I felt that I was going to collapse from exhaustion, but for some reason my dad reminded me that this was building my character. I thought to myself, "What the hell does that even mean?" He gave me a look as if saying that if I quit now I'd be letting him down.

The work was tiring and exhausting and I felt emotional when he told me he used to do this work daily with his dad in Mexico. I couldn't fathom how tough it was when he told me he built the little pueblo house he grew up in. For years my father would tell me stories about long sunny days in the sun with his father, but I didn't think much of it at the time. The long hours in the blistering sun turned into cool afternoons where the fumes would evaporate. At the end of the day my dad pointed to our fridge and asked me to bring him a beer. I came back and he said "Mijo no vas agarrar una para ti?"

I remember that day was the first time I drank a beer with my dad, and in many ways I felt that I grew-up right in front of him. It was better than getting a baseball glove that summer because I got to enjoy a moment with my dad that I'll never forget.

## Reflection

My time working on poems was more than just a reflection of my life and memories, but a nostalgic reminder of where I've come from. Coming into class every day I looked forward to sharing these stories in our notebooks and getting the chance to express these memories. I chose the following three poems because I felt that they connected me to my past and was passionate about sharing my perspective in this space. I talked about me and my father's relationship heavily in my poems mainly because of the distinct memories I have of growing-up with him. Never before have I gotten the chance to express myself about that subject and it felt great to reflect on this. During the draft process I felt the need to add more anecdotes into my poems and include more descriptions that would strengthen my pieces. Having the class edit them was also key in the writing process because I got the chance to read my peers' pieces and get some editing in.

Reading other poems helped me during the finalization of the pieces because I got the sense that as a class we were all telling a big story about our lives and how we have all grown from these individual experiences. I came home and thought about all the stories I read and the obstacles that many of us had to go through and how much our lives have changed since. The experience of writing these poems felt more than just an outlet to let my voice be heard but a form of expression that helped me learn more about myself. I feel at times in our busy lives we forget about the small things like family and values that are at times looked over. Having the chance to write about our struggles gave me the chance to reflect about the past and about where I'm going in the future.